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Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences
Department of Public Administration and Management

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESSES IN CLUJ-NAPOCA

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Abstract

Participatory budgeting is an instrument used everywhere in the world today to develop communities and democracy in order to increase the accountability and capacity of the public administration. Participatory budgeting processes have important outcomes in terms of increasing democratic representation of previously excluded categories, increasing the level of trust between authorities and citizens, expanding public service delivery and increasing the quality of public services, but positive results are not always guaranteed. Participatory budgeting processes have their own risks and limitations. A strong civil society is a favorable premise and a clear commitment of the governors to delegate their authority is a must.

Between 2013 and 2018, several participatory processes that could be included in the field of participatory budgeting have been carried out in Cluj-Napoca and have been used as a model for processes in other cities in Romania and the European Union. Through these processes, a participatory culture was promoted both at the local community level and at the local public administration level, their development being an important element in building a local system of participatory governance and an inclusive public sphere.

Keywords: participatory budgeting, participatory governance, democratic innovation, citizen participation, Romania.

1. Participatory budgeting **– an instrument of economic and social development**

1.1. Promises and limitations of participatory budgeting processes

Participatory budgeting (PB from here on) is a democratic instrument that is presented today in many forms. It has several definitions but, in essence, it represents a process by which the citizens are involved in the decision-making process regarding the way budgetary resources are allocated (Goldfrank, 2007, p. 92). Participatory budgeting has seen a remarkable development over the past 20 years; many processes using this name have been carried out in different forms and with the support of various social and political actors, and this polymorphism was possible due to the evolution of the concept. Even though the initial model in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre remains an important point of reference, the policy of participatory governance is defined today in different forms (de Oliveira, 2017, p. 72).

As Ganuza and Baiocchi (2012) show, there are two stages in the evolution and spread of participatory budgeting (PB) globally. The process appeared in the late 1980s in Brazil, in the context of transition from dictatorship to democracy; PB was the center of a political strategy of the Worker's Party, a left-wing party, but with an eloquent ideological approach, that brought together a rather wide spectrum, from the social-democrats to left-wing radicals, a party that had strong ties with trade unions, community movements, and Brazilian organized civil society, all these movements reigning after the years of military dictatorship (Guidry, 2003, p. 84). In a country marked by profound inequalities, much greater than those that could be seen at the end of communism in the countries of Eastern Europe, PB was an instrument promising to bring social justice, good governance and, last but not least, votes for the Worker's Party. PB spread rapidly to Brazil and other South American countries.

But, in the late 1990s, success led to a major change of approach as PB has come into international attention becoming a good practice considered appropriate to be replicated irrespective of the governing party, as well as in Brazil, where other parties continued the PB processes. Thus, the PB was separated from the initial idea that it was an 'institutional reform' and continued its global expansion with a politically neutral instrument, an instrument of 'good governance'. In the process of global expansion, PB has been adapted to local conditions and often combined with other participatory processes (Röcke, 2014, pp 4-5) and has acquired the ability to express different experiences and to attract different stakeholders.

While the parties that originally supported PB saw the process as a contribution to the 'reconceptualization of socialism' (even though the idea of 'socialism' had different interpretations in the context, it had in its center the idea of 'social justice') 'development agencies see it as one among several tools for reconceptualizing development' (Goldfrank, 2007, p. 96). The adoption of PB as a neutral working tool contributed to the imposition of the view that participation is an important element for economic and social development and the idea that good governance is necessary

for economic growth (Goldfrank, 2007, p. 96). Thus, the United Nations Development Program (1997) defines the following aspects as being characteristics of good governance: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness efficiency, accountability and strategic vision.

However, the fact that PB is seen by development agencies and many local stakeholders as a neutral tool, it doesn't mean that all social actors see it that way; different views on what PB is or should be, views determined by a different ideological background, assumed publicly or not, lead to different interpretations and criticisms of PB processes. For example, debates on defining PBs are well known and debates whether a particular experience is a PB case or not follow. For many who practice it, the limit for tie-break is related to decision-making: is the decision made by the citizens 'binding' or is it 'advisory'?, while for others the limit has to do with the 'quality of participation' (Ganuza and Baiocchi, 2012, pp. 8-9). Citizens are also preoccupied by the extent to which their participation is significant and will be taken into account by the authorities (Peixoto, 2008, p. 22).

However, although PB processes are an element that supports 'political inclusion and greater social justice', they are neither a universal panacea, nor a solution without limitations (Wampler, 2007, pp. 45-47). One of the most common limitations comes from focusing (in the great majority of cases) on public infrastructure investments. Beyond the projects that immediately affect their lives, few participants are interested in public learning processes and wider public policies. Later, after a project is implemented, the pressing need disappears and the number of participants decreases because participation tends to be stimulated by obtaining specific resources and goods rather than public learning. There are also budget programs related to broader public policies, such as those related to education, but these are fewer. Also, the tendency to focus on short- and medium-term infrastructure projects is the difficulty of generating debates about the future of the city. Another limitation comes from the dependency on authorities' commitment. Although the actors of the civil society are important, the success of participatory budgeting programs is due to the commitment of the political leaders who are governing. Another limitation comes from focusing the debates on local issues, as these programs are usually run by local authorities, while solutions to major issues the communities are facing may be at the regional or national level. If the economic and social exclusion is a structural one, the possibilities for action at local level are limited; and there is a need for socio-economic reforms and actions that go beyond the PB field and what such a process might be reasonably expected to achieve. Furthermore, the danger of manipulating the entire process cannot be ruled out: mainly by the mayor and other local elected representatives, but also by civil society leaders who want to impose their agenda (there is also the possibility that some NGOs or other social movements do not support the organization of a PB process because they perceive it as a threat to their role in the local governance system).

We know from Alexis de Tocqueville (1835-1840/2017) that a strong associative life is an element that favors the participation of citizens in public affairs. Studies on par-

ticipative processes show that the existence of a strong organized civil society creates a good environment for participative processes and innovations (Mansuri and Rao, 2013, p. 289; Berman, 2017, p. 205) and participative budgeting processes are a model of co-governance, whose favorable premises are also constituted by political support and a strong civil society (Röcke, 2014, p. 175).

Although PB provides many examples of remarkable achievements as a community development tool (such as redirecting public resources to the poorest areas that are most in need of intervention, increasing transparency and accountability of the authorities, expanding public services delivery, stimulating the development of civil society's organizations, increasing the democratic representation of some previously excluded categories, increasing trust between authorities and citizens) these favorable results are by no means guaranteed by the development of some participatory budgeting processes and even successful cases can show some contradictory results (Goldfrank, 2007, p. 98). When public space becomes open to debate and citizens have a say outside the classical frameworks of representative democracy, the different logic of participation, representation and expert knowledge can collide even in the best organized participatory processes (Ganuza and Baiocchi, 2012, p. 8).

Considering that all public participation processes increasingly use online tools (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015, p. 5), participatory budgeting processes are no exception, starting with Brazil, at Ipatinga since 2000 (Wampler, 2010, pp. 133-134), such instruments are being used today in various forms (see Haller and Faulkner, 2012, p. 23, for Denver, Colorado or Diamond and Pearce, 2010, p. 159, for Manchester, UK). The main condition stays the same, meaning that the demands of citizens be heard and taken into consideration (Garcia, Pinto and Ferraz, 2005, p. 508) because technology is only a tool.

1.2. The context of the development of participatory budgeting processes in Cluj-Napoca

In recent years, there has been a constant concern at European level about having a greater citizens' participation in democratic exercises in different forms and about finding structured dialog formulas between authorities and the civil society. On the whole, the European Union is concerned with the lack of citizen participation, which raises the question of legitimacy. However, there is no uniform regulation or approach at European level, and certain states have explicit provisions, while others have only relatively vague references. But the concern for various forms of public participation (including PB) is widespread. In fact, since 1985, the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Preamble) states that 'the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic principles that are shared by all member States of the Council of Europe' and that 'it is at local level that this right can be most directly exercised' (Arpad and Parvu, 2013, pp. 24-27).

There are also a number of documents where the European Commission explicitly uses the term and recommends the use of PB. An example is the Communication to

the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions of 13 November 2011 on The Future Approach to EU Budget Support to Third Countries (European Commission, 2011); also, the Communication of 15 May 2013 on Empowering Local Authorities in Partner Countries for Enhanced Governance and More Effective Development Outcomes states that 'the EU should also support initiatives allowing citizens to identify, discuss, and prioritize public spending projects (e.g. participatory budgeting)' (European Commission, 2013, p. 9).

At European level, the number of participatory budgeting processes increased from 55 to over 1,300 between 2005 and 2012. In 2001, municipalities in France, Spain, and Italy introduced PB; in 2008, Lisbon was the first European city to host online PBs and, in 2014, Paris has embarked on a major participatory budgeting process (Sguelo, 2016, p. 3).

In Romania, there are no provisions in the legislation that explicitly refer to the concept of participatory budgeting, to detail it and to provide a working definition, however, there is a legal framework that obliges the authorities to inform and consult the citizens and the organized civil society to take into account the proposals received, so there is a basis on which, in the presence of political will, processes that can be considered as participatory budgeting may be carried out legally.

Fundamental provisions that support public participation (including PB) are contained in the legislation of the functioning of local public administration, the regulation of budgetary procedures and the transparency of the decision-making (Arpad and Parvu, 2013, pp. 34-35). Local Public Administration Law no. 215/2001 specifies that 'public administration in territorial-administrative units shall be organized and operate on the basis of the decentralization principles, local autonomy, defocussing of public services, eligibility of local public administration authorities, legality and consultation of citizens in solving local issues of particular interest'. Law no. 52/2003 on Decisional Transparency in Public Administration provides that 'active participation of citizens in the administrative decision-making and drafting of normative acts' and Law no. 242/2010, which completes Law no. 52/2003, extends this principle to the elaboration and adoption of public policy documents (Moldovan and Stan, 2013, pp. 50-59).

Cluj-Napoca is a city with a strong and active associative life (with over 2,000 NGOs operating in the city) with a local culture that favors civic action, the Development Strategy (Cluj Management and Planning Group, 2014, p. VI) considering 'participation' as being one of the key strategic factors that will influence the community in the long run, alongside 'University' and 'Innovation'. The vision established in Cluj-Napoca defines the city's development in terms of the quality of life of its inhabitants and proposes a sustainable development of the community in the context of a participatory governance system, proposing to strike a balance between economic growth and social cohesion (Boc, 2017, p. 8). The participatory governance system that exists in Cluj-Napoca is a Quintuple Helix type, where the public administration,

the universities and the private sector with NGOs (organized civil society) and the citizens work together, each social actor and each citizen being considered capable of formulating solutions to the public problems and each having the right to participate in the decision-making (Boc, 2018, p. 62).

The first concerns about a participatory approach to city administration emerged in Cluj-Napoca in 2000 in the academic and civil society. The public participation actions were put into practice by the Cluj-Napoca City Hall, in various forms, starting with 2004. Over the last 15 years, the local government has made systematic efforts to build a governance structure in the city, where public debate and the participation of the citizens, civil society organizations and academics and professional associations are central elements, whether we are talking about setting the annual budget or major projects for the city. As a result of the public debates and the comments made by the interested parties, significant changes have been made to the implementation of some projects (Cluj-Napoca City Hall, 2014, pp. 3-4).

The participatory budgeting processes developed in Cluj-Napoca between 2013 and 2018 will be briefly presented in the following sections.

2. Participatory budgeting processes carried out in Cluj-Napoca

2.1. Pilot Project Mănăştur, 2013

In 2002, during the electoral campaign, a group of civic organizations asked the local public administration to organize participatory budgeting processes. In December 2012, the municipality invited the petitioners to participate in a working group, which was attended by experts from the Universities in Cluj and representatives of other NGOs. The working group has produced a framework document on principles and process development and a document on participatory budgeting as an instrument of inclusive urban development and urban regeneration (Cluj-Napoca City Hall, undated). The proposed approach advocated active citizenship, social cohesion, civic culture development, budgetary and administrative transparency, proposing a process that followed the Porto Alegre pattern. The City Hall considered these documents and supported the basic principles and the active participation of the citizens in establishing investment priorities, but opted for a pragmatic, direct approach to citizens' participation and did not support the option of having citizen delegates (as would be the case with the Brazilian classic model). The City Hall did not allocate a pre-set amount for PB because of the associated risks in the specific socio-political context: the mayor and the City Hall could have been accused of using public money as a tool of political propaganda and, also, the attention could have changed from neighborhood issues that needed to be addressed to discussing what would be the correct amount of money that is going to be pre-allocated. In practice, we used techniques that favor direct interaction among citizens (with a consensus approach) and direct interaction between citizens and the representatives of the administration, mainly 'Large Group/Small Group Meetings' but also 'Open House' and 'Public Hearings' (Creighton, 2005, pp. 140-141).

In the City Hall's vision the main goal of the Participatory Budgeting initiative in Mănăştur neighborhood has been to develop and strengthen participatory local governance by empowering the local community, while increasing decisional transparency and making more sustainable public decisions. Specific objectives were: (a) to reduce the barriers of communication and cooperation between citizens and local public administration; (b) to increase the efficiency of public spending; (c) to increase the sustainability of public policies and investments in the local community; and (d) to create and promote a participatory culture both among citizens and at the institutional level, within the local public administration.

Also, at the request of the Cluj-Napoca City Hall, the World Bank organized a conference about participatory budgeting on the 10th-13th of June 2013 to provide expertise in the pilot process started in Cluj-Napoca. The conference was attended by experts involved in participatory budgeting projects which took place in South America, North America and Europe: Lewis Michaelson (vice president IAP2 – the International Association for Public Participation), Owen Brugh (project responsible at Chicago City Hall), Tarson Nunez (former project manager at Porto Alegre), Michelangelo Secchi (project manager at Arezzo), Giovanni Allegretti (University of Coimbra). During the discussions held at the conference, the experts proposed, in addition to specific recommendations for the process in 2013, that the following participatory budgeting processes organized by the City Hall should include specific objectives for the European Capital of Youth 2015 (title which the city has already earned) respectively European Capital of Culture, Cluj-Napoca being at that moment candidate in the competition of cultural capitals (Boc, 2018, p. 68).

More than 600 citizens participated directly in the PB process in the Mănăştur neighborhood, but the total number of indirect participants (represented by leaders of the Home Owners Associations) was more than 10,000 in a neighborhood with more than 100,000 inhabitants. All the proposals debated and prioritized by the citizens were formulated by themselves as the City Hall did not propose a predefined list, but just made a list based on the proposals made by participants.

As a result of the pilot process carried out in the Mănăştur neighborhood, solutions to the citizens' problems were implemented by the citizens as a priority: the rehabilitation of a neighborhood cinema ('Dacia', inaugurated on 19 May 2016), the modernization of two important arteries, the rehabilitation of a park as well as dozens of other small projects to solve the neighborhood problems (repairs or improvements of playgrounds or green spaces, repairs or improvements of public lighting, measures to increase traffic safety, and so on), the total budget of the works being approximately 4 million euros, and were made over the next 3 years.

The whole process focused on public investment (larger or smaller) as a result of an approach that came both from the City Hall and the citizens. The emphasis on public works establishes a direct link between participation and outcomes and allows community members to define and prioritize their needs, because in this area local authorities have the necessary authority and the resources to act, enabling partici-

pants to better understand what responsibilities the authorities have (Wampler, 2007, pp. 37-38), all the more so as the existing public investment regulations, possibilities and restrictions are not always intuitive (Su, 2017, p. 71).

At the local level, criticisms was expressed in the public space regarding the process carried out in the Mănăştur neighborhood, which shows that there are different views in Cluj-Napoca, determined by a different ideological background, regarding what it is or what isn't or should be participatory budgeting; also, the PB approach as a politically neutral instrument, as a good governance tool, as a process that pursues (only) local development is subject to criticism in Cluj-Napoca, just like in other cities in the world. Essentially, such an environment in which different views are expressed in the public space is a prerequisite for participatory processes.

The International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IODP) awarded the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca with a Special Mention of the International Jury for the 'Participatory Budgeting in Mănăştur District' (Madrid, 24 to 26 March, 2015). IODP is an international association that brings together more than 500 associations and institutions that are interested in the development and results of participatory democracy.

2.2. Com'on Cluj-Napoca 2015 and 2016 and Com'on Europe 2018-2019

During 2015, Cluj-Napoca held the title of European Youth Capital. Twelve cities from the member states of the European Council were in the competition, and 'Youth@Cluj-Napoca 2015', developed through an active partnership with the local youth sector, was the winning concept chosen by the international jury. The association that managed the implementation the program was the Share Federation, which brought together 36 youth associations.

In this context, the Pont Group, an association that played a central role in the implementation and promotion of the application, carried out the project entitled 'Youth Participatory Budget in Cluj2015, the European Youth Capital' (Com'on Cluj-Napoca 2015), in partnership with the Share Federation and the Cluj-Napoca City Hall and Local Council (Boc, 2018, pp. 69-70). The project was initiated by the Pont Group and benefited by the financial support of the European Economic Area Mechanism 2009-2014 through the NGO Fund, the Component of Involvement and co-financing from the Local Council. The aim of the project was to support the participation of youth in deliberative and decision-making process on how to spend a sum of money coming from the public budget.

The informal youth groups had the opportunity to submit applications to be funded with maximum 1,000 euros from the local budget, with the maximum budget of an initiative amounting to 2,000 euros (up to 1,000 euros being their own contribution). Participation was open to any initiative group of at least 3 young people between the ages of 14 and 35 years old, with no restrictions of residence, training/experience, sex, ethnicity, etc. An initiative group could propose up to 5 initiatives. The classification of the best initiative was done through a voting mechanism online and offline (on a paper form). In the course of the project an important segment was occupied by a

community facilitation action carried out in large part in schools and faculties, practically an information and support action for setting informal groups and project ideas. The proposals fell within the six priorities of the Cluj-Napoca 2015 Program: Share Space, Share Culture, Share Work, Share Power, Share Joy and Share Vision.

In total, 248 initiative groups have submitted projects, the participants in these groups having an average age of 25. Of the 451 initiatives submitted, after a prior assessment, 437 were subject to vote, and then 102 that were financed. 18,782 people expressed their vote, a total of 48,609 of votes being recorded (each voter could vote for 10 projects). The young were those who initiated such small projects and they were also largely the ones who decided the order of priorities.

Using the same model, the Pont group (in partnership with the Association for Community Relations, the Erste Foundation and the Commercial Bank of Romania together with the City Hall and the Local Council of Cluj-Napoca) also carried out the Com'on Cluj-Napoca project 2016. The activities proposed in 2016 had to be in line with the five priorities of the Cluj-Napoca candidacy for the title of European Capital of Culture, 2021. The proposed project suggested a five-step shift model, W.E.A.S.T., each letter being the acronym of an action whereby actors of change (the citizens) can contribute to the community transformation, namely Wonder, Explore, Activate, Share, and Trust.

A change of tone was represented by the possibility to vote for projects with no age restriction, although the project proposals were made by young people aged between 18 and 35 precisely in the idea of building a relationship of trust among all citizens.

Also, following the analysis of the Com'on Cluj-Napoca 2015 results, the City Hall proposed to set up a special section for groups of young people with fewer opportunities (in 2015, the proposals from young people in disadvantaged communities, though they existed, gathered very few votes). In 2016, 65 initiatives were funded from the local budget, 5 of which were proposed by groups of young people with fewer opportunities. 161 proposals from 87 initiative groups have been tabled and voted on; 16,872 people voted, with a total of 40,978 votes.

The Pont Group is coordinating the participatory budgeting project for Youth named Com'on Europe (2017-2019). The project is funded by the Erasmus+ program under Key Action 2, Strategic Partnerships for Youth, the partners of the European project coming from Cluj-Napoca (Romania), Braga and Cascais (Portugal), Maribor (Slovenia), Salonic (Greece), Torino (Italy) and Varna (Bulgaria).

In each of the partner cities, the implementation of participatory processes took specific forms, considering the specific history of public participation and the options of local partners, but in Cluj-Napoca (where there is a partnership with the City Hall and the Local Council) the project was based on the experience gained in 2015 and 2016. The city of Maribor (Slovenia) also used the model of Cluj. It should be noted that outside Com'on Europe, a project based on the same model will be implemented in Sfantu Gheorghe.

The project was maintained in Cluj-Napoca, participation was open to informal groups of young people aged between 14 and 35. The initiatives were in 2018, with the vote (no age limit) in 2019 and the implementation of the winning initiatives. 124 initiative groups made 135 proposals and after a preliminary assessment 123 proposals will be submitted to vote, at least 50 of which will receive funding. The project's slogan was 'Get Up for a Common Cluj', urging civic participation.

All the COM'ON projects addressed young people and encouraged informal groups to propose and implement small projects in various fields: cultural events, sporting events, education actions for sustainable development and environmental protection, innovative use of some areas in the city, interaction between different communities in the city, highlighting the diversity and multiculturalism of the city, student contests, etc. As with the pilot project in Mănăştur, Com'on projects have been subject to criticism in the public space of Cluj-Napoca, which shows the vitality of the local public sphere.

2.3. 2017 and 2019 online participatory budgeting

In 2017, the Cluj-Napoca City Hall took a step forward to transform PB from an experiment into a core segment of the local governance system (a condition to make the most of the potential of such processes; see Lerner, 2017, p. 160), organizing the first online participatory budgeting process in Romania. The registration of the participants, the submission of the projects and then the vote was made on the platform which was adapted for mobile devices as well (Cluj-Napoca City Hall, 2019).

The people who could participate in the process were the citizens who lived, worked or studied in Cluj-Napoca and were at least 18. It is noteworthy that in the initial phase, the idea of being able to vote at 6 was proposed (as in New York, for example; see Swaner, 2017, p. 96), but eventually the minimum age of 18 was chosen.

The projects have been divided into several areas, with the public investment approach being obvious: (1) alleys, sidewalks, and pedestrian areas; (2) mobility, accessibility, and traffic safety; (3) green areas and playgrounds; (4) arrangements of public spaces (urban furniture, public lighting, etc.); (5) educational and cultural infrastructure; and (6) digital city. Each citizen was able to formulate one or more project proposals (one project per domain) through the online platform, and the maximum estimated budget for each project was 150,000 euros.

A total of 338 proposals were submitted under the 2018 online Participatory Budgeting Project. Of these, following a technical and legal analysis carried out by a team from the Cluj-Napoca City Hall, 126 projects were declared eligible and submitted to the citizens' vote. The vote was structured in two stages, with 30 projects being selected in the first stage, out of which 15 winning projects were established in the second stage.

In the first round of voting, each citizen enrolled on the participatory budgeting platform could choose 6 projects (one for each of the six established domains). At this stage, 29,138 votes were received from 8,559 users. In the second round of voting, each citizen could choose one project out of the 30 established in the first stage, with

11,499 votes being casted. It is worth noting an increase in the number of people who voted in the second stage by 34%, an increase due to a significant mobilization process around some projects.

At the end of the second round of voting, 15 projects were selected. The first project in each area, ranked by the number of votes, was selected automatically and the rest of the projects were selected in order of the number of votes, irrespective of the field they belong to.

It is important to note that while the process has also taken into account the needs of people who do not have access to the Internet or who don't know how to use technology or mobile devices, thus ensuring the access of all the citizens. These people were able to submit project proposals and vote with the help of the City Hall employees and volunteers.

In 2018, the PB online process resumed under the same conditions. 164 projects were submitted, with 47 projects being voted on. In the first round of voting, there were 4,342 voters (with 14,920 votes) and in the second round of voting, 4,112 voters. It is worth noting that in the second year the participation declined. It is possible that one of the factors that contributed to this decline might be the fact that, one year after the completion of the 2017 trial, only 3 projects of the 15 projects were finalized, with the remainder being in various stages of implementation. The implementation of some projects can take several years because there is a number of legal steps that public investments need to go through, that in the future will need to be communicated more clearly to the citizens who proposed and supported these projects.

Several cities in Romania, like Sibiu and Oradea, developed PB processes in forms in which the influence of the processes carried out in Cluj-Napoca can be observed.

3. Conclusions

In recent years, several public participation processes were tested in Cluj-Napoca, in forms that constituted a first in Romania and who were, at least in part, taken as a model for processes implemented in other cities in Romania and the European Union. Running the six previously mentioned participatory budgeting processes and allocating resources for the implementation of the resulting projects shows that there is political will needed to support the participation of citizens in the decision making processes regarding the allocation of budgetary resources.

The promotion of a participative culture was made both at the local community level and at the level of the local public administration because the implementation of projects proposed by the citizens implies collaboration between the citizens and the administration. This collaboration means a symbolic delegation of the power held by the elected authorities and by the bureaucracy to the citizens. The result is an improvement of the administrative capacity that adapts itself to the participatory local governance system, but also a mutual learning process for both the administration and the citizens, thus enhancing sustainability of public policies and investments. The employees of the City Hall who participated in the organization of the processes

are much more open to collaborating with citizens, recognizing the benefits of participatory governance and the need to involve more of their colleagues in the participatory processes.

In the PB processes in Cluj-Napoca, there are elements that show a preoccupation for social justice, but social justice is not placed formally in the center of these processes, which are seen and promoted by the authorities as being a neutral tool, as a technocrat tool used for the development of the local community.

Carrying out these processes is central to the construction of a local system of participatory governance and of an inclusive public sphere, but further research is needed to assess the progress and long-term effects of the PB processes run or funded (at least partially) by the Cluj-Napoca municipality.

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